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HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR

First Call for Home Canners

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☆ MAY 19 1937 ☆

U. S. Department of Agriculture

A dialogue between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Morse Salisbury, Radio Service, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC stations, Thursday, May 13, 1937.

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MR. SALISBURY:

Now swinging back into our usual Thursday schedule, here's Ruth Van Deman, back on the job ready to bring you another report from the Bureau of Home Economics. But, Ruth, first I have a personal question to ask you.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

What's that, Morse? You aren't going to embarrass me right here before these Farm and Home Hour friends.

MR. SALISBURY:

Oh no, nothing like that. I'm just going to repeat the request of many of your listeners, and ask you to spell your name once again, so they'll know how to write to you.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Is that all. I'm used to that. I have to do it every time I telephone to a store or leave a message with a stranger. It's very simple really
V - a - n D - e - m - a - n.

MR. SALISBURY:

V as in vitamins, D as in diet.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Skip it, Morse. This is May time. Be poetic, make it V as in violet and D as in dogwood, or daffodil - - -

MR. SALISBURY:

Or dandelion. Come out to my house, and I'll let you work off that poetic urge digging dandelions from the grass in my yard.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Maybe I'll do that some day and surprise you. But I have much more important things on my chest today. Pressure canners and glass jars, and tin cans, all the things that have to do with home canning. The spring rush of canning questions has started. It always does as soon as the asparagus and the rhubarb push through the ground.

So if the home canners wish to stand-by for a few minutes, I'll be glad to run through some of the points about methods and equipment. We find that checking up on these at the beginning of the season saves a lot of grief later when the beans and peas and corn roll in from the garden in quantity.

(over)

First of all, the kind of canner. We are still recommending the boiling-water bath for fruits and tomatoes. But for asparagus, beans, corn and all the other vegetables that are neither acid nor juicy, we believe that the steam pressure outfit is the only safe one to use. If anyone tells you to the contrary, just put it down that that person is not speaking for the Department of Agriculture. The Department's home canning times and temperatures are based on scientific findings. So until the bacteriologists discover new thermal death points for the dangerous members of the bacteria tribe, we shall continue to say process the nonacid vegetables at 240 and 250 degrees Fahrenheit.

As I've remarked before, you have to really "turn on the heat" to kill the dangerous micro-organisms. They can play possum for long periods and deceive you into thinking they've passed out or never were present at all. They change into what is called "the spore stage" and lie dormant. Then all of a sudden when conditions are just right, they begin to grow again and contaminate the food in a way highly dangerous to the health of people who eat it.

So the Bureau of Home Economics takes a stand as firm as the Rock of Gibraltar on this canning question. The Gibraltar in this case being the evidence turned in by hundreds of careful scientific workers all over the country. And from this evidence the Department would not be true to its public trust if it recommended anything but the steam pressure method for nonacid vegetables and meats.

But the steam pressure canner isn't foolproof. It needs watching to keep it operating right. For instance the pressure gage can get out of order. Then the pounds of pressure registered by the gage are no longer a true indication of the temperature inside. When the gage works properly, a pressure of 12 pounds means a temperature of 250 degrees in the canner. And you need every bit of that 250 degrees - to drive the temperature of the food in the jars up to the point needed to kill the bacteria.

MR. SALISBURY:

What can a woman do if she has suspicions that the gage on her pressure canner has gone haywire?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Get in touch with her nearest home demonstration agent, and ask her if she has a master gage or a maximum thermometer to test it with. If that's impossible, then it would be best to send the top of the canner, gage and all, back to the factory and have a new gage put in, pronto.

MR. SALISBURY:

Suppose she's satisfied that the gage is all right. Any other parts of a pressure canner that need checking on?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Yes, several. The safety valve and the petcock, in particular. They must both be clean and in proper working order. A safety valve that fails to work may result in an accident. And if the petcock isn't behaving right, you may have air inside your canner instead of all live steam. When that happens the pressure registered on the gage is not a true indication of the temperature, either.

MR. SALISBURY:

What size of a pressure canner do you recommend for home use?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

I'm glad you brought that up. I had a letter the other day from a man out in Ohio asking me that same question. He said a pressure canner costs quite a bit and he didn't want to make a mistake. He said also that at his house they'd like to make this one year in which not a single can of anything spoiled.

But getting back to the size of canner to buy. Anywhere from the 18 to the 30 quart size is all right. Miss Stienbarger, who does our experimental work on home canning, thinks that it's unwise to use a canner smaller than the 18 quart size. It's almost impossible she says to keep the pressure constant in the smaller ones. And when the temperature sky-rockets up and down, the food may be overprocessed, or worse yet not processed enough. Also if you are using glass jars, a lot of liquid will be forced out by these quick rises and falls of pressure. There's almost always bound to be some loss of liquid from glass jars in a pressure canner, but you want to make it just as little as possible.

MR. SALISBURY:

When you operate a steam pressure canner it looks as though you have to be something of an engineer as well as a bacteriologist.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Yes, in an amateurish way.

MR. SALISBURY:

Well, I'm sorry but I have to be a professional timekeeper right now and call a halt on this interesting talk on canning.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Quite all right, Morse. This is just the first call for home canners. I'll have lots more to say before the summer is over.

MR. SALISBURY:

And now that people know how to spell your name, Miss V - a - n D - e - m - a - n, I'm sure you'll be getting lots more letters with questions.

Miss Van Deman has left the microphone, but as she went she handed me this answer to every home canner's prayer - the Farmers' Bulletin called "Home canning of fruits, vegetables, and meats." It's a regular handbook of information about home canning, and gives methods, equipment, and timetables. So if you want to give a thorough check over to your home canning procedures, drop a card to Miss Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., and I know she'll see to it that you get a copy of the bulletin on "Home canning of fruits, vegetables, and meats."

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